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INAUGURATION OF DR. C. A. BRIGGS,
AT UNION SEMINARY, NEW YORK.

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THE INAUGURATION OF DR. C. A. BRIGGS AT UNION SEMINARY, NEW YORK.

THE Presbyterian Church in this country is making history rapidly. In aggressive work at home and in extensive efforts abroad, the different members of the Presbyterian family are purchasing for themselves a good report at the present day. Our brethren of the great Northern branch of Presbyterianism, however, are just now engaged in what will doubtless make some important history in the near future. They have entered, in a carefully guarded way, upon the revision of the historic doctrinal symbols of Presbyterianism, and a large and representative committee is now preparing a report for the next General Assembly, which meets in Detroit in May.

The echoes of the revision discussion of a year ago had scarcely died away when an event occurred which can hardly fail to have great signifi-

cancee. That event is the inauguration of Dr. Charles A. Briggs as professor of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary, New York, and the delivery of an address by him on that occasion. Mr. Charles Butler, president of the Seminary Board, gave \$100,000 to found and endow this chair; and in connection therewith he nominated Dr. Briggs as its first incumbent. The Board confirmed the nomination, Dr. Briggs accepted the post, and was transferred from the Hebrew chair to that of Biblical Theology. He entered upon his duties at once, and on the 20th of January, 1891, was solemnly and formally installed, in the presence of a large and distinguished assembly gathered in the Seminary Chapel. After the opening exercises Dr. Briggs accepted the doctrines and polity of the Presbyterian Church, in the following terms :

"I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and I do now, in the presence of God and the Directors of this Seminary, solemnly and sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. I do also, in like manner, approve of the Presbyterian Form of Government, and I do solemnly promise that I will not teach or inculcate anything *which shall appear to me to be subversive* of the said system of doctrine, or of the principles of said Form of Government, so long as I shall continue to be a professor in the Seminary." (Italics mine.)

The newly inducted professor was then addressed by Rev. Dr. Frazer of Newark, N. J., who was a classmate of Dr. Briggs, in the class of 1864, in Union Seminary.

Then followed the inaugural address, which, we are told, occupied more than an hour and a half, and was delivered with great freedom, fervor, eloquence and power. An authorized syllabus of the address has been published in several papers, and it may be taken for granted that most of our readers have already seen it. It is not necessary, therefore, to copy it *in extenso* in this note, which can only be a mere sketch at best.

The publication of an *authorized* syllabus of the address renders it a reliable and legitimate subject of discussion. The religious and other journals of the North have been discussing its merits very freely, and the Southern branch of the Presbyterian Church has naturally a deep interest in the great movements which affect the church at the North. That interest, moreover, will assuredly be of the kindest and most fraternal nature. Whilst we must differ most decidedly with the posi-

tions taken by Dr. Briggs, and cannot but deplore the signs of radical drifting from the historic moorings of Presbyterianism which his address indicates, we would still cherish the hope that in due time it will be made evident that the following which Dr. Briggs has in his own church is very small.

The subject of the address is, "The Authority of the Scriptures," but the discussion leads over a wide field, and the friendly and unfriendly critics seem to differ greatly as to the aim and scope of the address. Before we let the address in a measure speak for itself, some gleanings from Northern exchanges may be of interest to our readers, as showing the trend of opinion regarding it near the scene of its delivery. The New York *Evangelist*, which has always been a strong advocate of revision and a warm supporter of Dr. Briggs, has an article which seems to combine the laudatory and apologetic elements in about equal proportions. It says: "No abstract can do any justice to its learning, comprehensiveness, eloquence, and spirituality," and then it goes on to explain and interpret the utterances of Dr. Briggs in such statements as these: "The main purpose of the address was to show that Biblical theology proves the authority of Scripture." . . . "The point was emphasized that the authority of Scripture is the authority of God, not of man; that barriers which prevent men from feeling this divine authority are of human rearing and need to be removed." . . . "The way was prepared for this main discussion by a consideration of the different avenues by which divine authority has actually, in human history, come to men, the church and reason having as a matter of fact shared this service with the Bible." Then the apologetic tone comes out more clearly, thus: "If any one should suppose that Dr. Briggs meant to imply that the Church and Reason were of equal rank with the Bible as channels of divine authority, the entire address, with its unreserved exaltation of the Scriptures, would be the only needed answer." After several similar statements are made the comforting assurance is given, that "Some minds will probably be relieved by the distinct statement—needless to those who know Dr. Briggs best—that he does not find a second probation in the Bible, and may be led to consider without prejudice whether in his (Dr. Briggs') belief in a progressive sanctification after death there is not a helpful truth."

The New York *Observer* at the date of this writing has simply given an account of the inauguration ceremony and a careful outline of the address. This vigorous journal will no doubt have said something clear and strong before this falls under the reader's eye. *The*

Herald and Presbyter in its article does not take very strong ground for or against the address. Such statements as the following arrest the reader's eye: "The inaugural address brings out in bold relief the peculiar views of the author." . . . "He announces no new views." . . . "Public opinion will now be more definite and accurate. We may expect that those who are dissatisfied will be more demonstrative than ever." . . . "Dr. Briggs is a leader in our church of a movement that is wide-spread in the religious world." At the close of the article the bearing of all this on the revision movement is alluded to in the following terms: "We are as much afraid of too much revision as of too little. We want nothing that impairs the system of doctrine. Those who sympathize with Dr. Briggs' peculiar views we feel sure will find no comfort in the report of the Revision Committee, and none in the action of the General Assembly upon it." *The Christian Intelligencer*, of New York, under the caption of DR. BRIGGS' VAGARIES, notes eleven points, makes some pertinent comments, and concludes its short article thus: "His address will gladden errorists of all sorts, and give a painful pang to many devout hearts. It will put upon the Theological Seminary which has honored him a very heavy burden." *The New York Independent*, in an able and temperate article, makes the following severe statement concerning the address in general, after alluding to various important particulars: "The general type and drift of this address, taken as a whole, seems to us as calculated to shed more darkness than light, and to raise more difficulties than it removes, and is better adapted to suggest doubts than it is to establish and confirm faith; and, hence, to deepen rather than to clear up the fog on the subject of religion." As might be expected, *The Presbyterian* has a strong article, in which the views set forth in the address are vigorously assailed. This article also points out the inconsistency of accepting, as Dr. Briggs does, the Confession of Faith, and then announcing such views as are set forth in the address. At the conclusion of the paragraph on this point it is stated that "it is not given to many men, as we believe, to plunge into inconsistencies with such a fatal facility." The tone of the whole article may be gathered very well from this statement: "What a sorrowful thing it is to see a man of so much learning, of so much real attractiveness, so finely qualified for opening up to young men the great historical revelations of God, made through the ages by inspired men, advance to his new position in the church with such words of contempt for his companions in ministerial and church life, and of exulting applause for their foes on his lips! It is simply

a matter for unfeigned lamentation." Other expressions of opinion from the East might be given, but space forbids, and at this date (February 10th) we have not been able to get our hands on an expression of opinion from the breezy West, or from the genial Pacific coast. What has been gleaned, however, will present a general view of the opinions formed of the address soon after it was given to the public in its authorized syllabus.

But it is high time that we had passed on to deal with the address for ourselves. No elaborate review of it can be made in the limits of this note, much as we feel inclined to enlarge.

As already stated, the subject of the address is "The authority of the Scriptures." This theme is discussed in a broad way under four heads: I. The sources of authority in religion. II. Barriers to the Bible. III. The Theology of the Bible. IV. The harmony of the sources of authority. The first is discussed under three particulars, the second under six, the third under eight, and the fourth in a general way. Before saying a few things regarding some of the views announced in the address, two obvious remarks may be made concerning its general spirit and tone.

In the first place, there are certain criticisms made at the expense of the reverent regard which many people have for the Scriptures that seem to us to border on the profane. We are assured by our report that the address throughout "breathed a spirit not merely of theological earnestness, but also of high religious fervor." Then another report tells us that Dr. Briggs gave utterance to the following: "*The* Bible is no better than a mass-book for stopping a bullet: and is not as good as holy water for putting out a fire." This may have been intended as a bit of pleasantry by Dr. Briggs to relieve the fatigue of a long address, in which it must have often been difficult for the hearer to be sure of the meaning of the speaker; still our deep rooted conviction is that such pleasantry must outrage the feelings of reverence for the word of God, which have a place in the earnest Christian heart. If a man has not fertility enough to make a joke to rest an audience without alluding in this way to the Scriptures, it is surely better to have no jokes at all. Wit is proper enough in its place, and there may be no sin in a hearty laugh, but only harm can come from levity or irreverence concerning sacred things of any kind.

The other general remark relates to the depreciatory tone in which the Scriptures and our reverent regard for them are repeatedly spoken of. This produced a painful impression on our mind the first time

the syllabus was perused, and repeated perusal of the statements made has not removed in the least degree that impression. We are told that "the Bible has been treated as if it were a baby, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, nursed and carefully guarded, lest it should be injured by heretics and infidels." The insinuation is made that Protestant theologians, even, are guilty of this abuse of the Bible. What must be the effect of such an expression on a man who already has little regard for the Scriptures? Then the high regard in which the Bible is held in the Christian church is called "Bibliolatry like unto Roman Catholic Mariolatry and Hagiolatry." How far will such a remark go to increase reverence for the Bible among Protestants? It is boldly stated that "there are errors in the Bible which no one has been able to explain away." How much will this fortify the average man in his confidence in the Bible as the word of God? Again, we are informed that "the ethical conduct of the holy men of the Bible was such that we would not receive them into our families, if they lived among us and did such things now as they did then." This sounds very like some utterances with which the perusal of infidel literature has made us familiar.

It may be that we are worshipping in great ignorance at the shrine which Protestant bibliolatry has set up, seeing that we have not yet imbibed the results of advanced critical scholarship, although we have stood by the stream and watched it flow past carrying a great deal of rubbish in its current, but we will continue to worship at the shrine of God's holy word all our days, and hope to die still a reverent bibliolater. It may also be that we are lacking that faith which enables us to believe even where there are errors which cannot be explained away, but we may still be allowed to believe that there were no errors in the autographs of the Bible since there is only hypothesis against it. We are also quite willing to admit that we have by no means attained to that degree of ethical culture which enables us to criticize the ethical precepts set forth in any part of the Scriptures, and yet we must confess that the tone of the address upon this point produced a painful impression. We would not be surprised to learn that some complimentary words have come to the ears of Dr. Briggs from quarters that are not at all well disposed towards the ethics of the Bible.

A few salient points in the address are now selected for brief consideration:

The first that meets us is the question of *authority* in matters of religion. Dr. Briggs tells us very truly that divine authority is the

only authority to which man can yield implicit obedience; then he goes on to say (and it sounds strange to Protestant ears) that there are three fountains of divine authority: 1. The Bible. 2. The Church. 3. The Reason. He says that "the great majority of Christians since the Apostles' days have found God through the church or institutional Christianity." He also states that "God makes himself known by the forms of reason, the metaphysical categories, the conscience, and the religious feelings," and that "he cannot deny the rationalists a place in the company of the faithful." He then sums up by adding that "men are influenced by their temperaments and their environments which of the three ways of access to God they may pursue."

In all this, and much more of a like nature in the syllabus, there is so much ambiguity of expression and confusion of thought, that it is by no means easy to tell what Dr. Briggs means, and so be in a position to offer satisfactory criticism.

In the first place, Dr. Briggs by no means makes it clear whether he regards the Bible, the church and the reason as of coördinate authority in religion. The syllabus does not inform us on this point, for it seems almost studiously to avoid saying what a single sentence would have made plain. *The Evangelist*, which seems to know the secrets of Dr. Briggs, interprets his position to be that "he gives the Bible the first place." But it does seem strange that such a master of expression as Dr. Briggs has shown himself to be in other writings should leave his meaning so obscure upon a cardinal point like this. Why is the reader so puzzled to get at the real opinion of Dr. Briggs in this case? His minimizing of the Bible and his exaltation of reason look suspicious, and what is said towards the close of the address does not remove the uncertainty. He there speaks of the church and reason as "the *other* seats of divine authority." "The Bible needs the church and the reason ere it can exert its full power upon the life of men." And growing eloquent, he adds: "I rejoice at the age of rationalism, with all its wonderful achievements in philosophy. I look upon it as preparing men to use reason in the last great age of the world." Such statements as these, taken together, force us to the conclusion that Dr. Briggs coöordinates the authority of the church and reason with that of the Bible, if he does not regard them as equal sources of authority in matters of faith and life. If this be so, then there is departure from the historic faith of Protestantism, and from the Confessional doctrine in regard to the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and life having divine authority.

In the second place, the views of Dr. Briggs on this question lead to endless confusion and are not without real danger. If the church be a source of authority, we at once ask what church, what branch of the church, are we to look to? Is it to the Protestant, or the Romish? Then, if to the Protestant Church, which one of its many branches are we to hear and obey? How can an earnest honest seeker after God find assured certainty by this means? Must we all wait till "the church of the future," of which Dr. Briggs writes so finely in *Whither*, has been formed? In like manner, if reason be made a source of authority the same perplexity arises. Whose reason, or what reason, is to be taken as the authority? Is it the natural reason and conscience, or is it the reason of a man under the renewing grace of God? How on this theory can an earnest seeker find certainty, unless he goes to the Scriptures, and rests not on reason as final? Dr. Briggs is historian and theologian enough to know that we have here the essential principles of Romanism and Rationalism respectively brought before us, if not accepted, in the views he presents. And, further, it is evident that if these three sources of authority should not agree, and they might often differ, there is no final source of appeal, and the confusion is complete. Unless the Scriptures, as the word of God, are taken to be the one source of absolute authority, we have no escape from the Romish doctrine on the one hand, or the Rationalistic on the other. So far as we can see, the address of Dr. Briggs seems to build a broad-gauge, down-grade road which logically leads to one or the other of these destinations. Is Presbyterianism prepared to leave the safe and narrow way which gives both the church and reason their proper places in matters of religion, but sets the Bible in the seat of undivided authority?

In the third place, Dr. Briggs confounds the question of the source or seat of authority with two other questions. Sometimes it is confounded with the question of the grounds or evidences that the Bible unfolds a divine revelation, and at other times with the question of the channels by which God makes himself known to men. Nearly all that the syllabus contains under the section on "Barriers to the Bible," pertains to the question of the evidences or proofs that the Bible is a supernatural revelation, and does not really touch the question of *authority* at all. A simple perusal of the address will confirm this remark. But worse still, nearly everything said in the section on the "sources of authority" relates to the way in which God makes himself known, and not to the question of authority in the proper sense. He speaks

again and again of men "finding God," "devout seekers after God," "avenues to God," etc., when the topic under discussion is that of *authority* in religion, not that of the way or avenue to God. The church and reason have their office in making God known to men, and of leading men to God, but they can only rightly discharge this office when they set forth the contents of Scripture, which is the seat of authority in matters of religious faith and life. The testimony of the church and the resources of reason have value in presenting the grounds or evidences that the Scriptures are of God and from God; but when this has been done, the voice of God speaking in these Scriptures is the only source of authority which is binding upon men. Any authority which the church or reason may have is derivative and subordinate. If the question be asked what is the source of the *authority* of the Scripture itself? we may very properly quote from the Confession what Dr. Briggs quotes in connection with the question of *authenticity*, where the enquiry is as to what books constitute Holy Scripture. This is a claim which Dr. Briggs has made in several of his writings, and it is worth while pointing out that it is the former of these questions to which the statement in the Confession relates, while Dr. Briggs quotes it in support of his views on the latter. Let the quotation speak for itself. "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, (who is truth itself,) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God. (*Conf.* Chap. I, Sec. IV.).

In the fourth place, the views set forth in the syllabus are impracticable, and in the end must leave men without any assured authoritative rule. If in actual application the church, the reason and the Bible are in conflict upon any point, which must yield, and where is the arbiter among the disputants? If each is admitted to be authoritative, on what ground can any one of the three be compelled to submit to another? From this dilemma there is no escape. But again, even reason and the church are fallible and may err in their deliverances, and in this case they at least are not always unfailing and reliable guides. On what ground can they rightly claim to be trustworthy sources of authority? But worse than all, so far as Dr. Briggs' views are concerned, an unconscious but merciless consistency finds the Scriptures in the same condition, for he tells us that "there are errors in the Bible which cannot be explained away." With a fallible church, an imperfect reason, and a Bible with remediless errors in it, we are

assuredly in a sad plight, so far as the source of authority in religion is concerned.

But we must pass on to make a few remarks on the views contained in the syllabus regarding some of the "Barriers to the Bible." He names six of these, as follows: 1. Superstition. 2. Verbal Inspiration. 3. Authenticity. 4. Inerrancy. 5. Violation of the Laws of Nature. 6. Minute Prediction. After reading what the syllabus sets forth concerning these so-called "barriers," our conviction is that, should Dr. Briggs succeed in removing these imaginary barriers from the Bible, the effect will be not to let the earnest seekers after God find him more easily or speedily, but to allow the enemies of our faith to pour in over the broken down barriers, and turn fruitful fields into a wilderness.

What we have to say will be confined to one of these "barriers," and that is the important one of "Verbal Inspiration," and along with it, of course, that of "Inerrancy."

The syllabus takes strong ground against verbal inspiration, but not any stronger than may be found in some of Dr. Briggs' other writings. He does not tell us what particular phase of the verbal inerrant inspiration is before his mind; but whatever it is, it is rejected without any ceremony. It is evident that he intends to go further than to reject the purely mechanical dictation theory of verbal inspiration, for if he only did this, few, perhaps, would find fault with him. That he intends to set aside every phase of the verbal theory is made very plain from his one-sided and ineffective criticism of the Princeton divines in *Whither*, and the repetition of similar views in the syllabus before us.

The following passages from the syllabus and other reports of the address show clearly that he rejects every form of the verbal theory. He says, "There is nothing divine in the text, in its letters, words or clauses. The divine authority is not in the style or in the words, but in the concept, and so the divine power of the Bible may be transferred into any language." A more extended report of the address in a measure interprets this statement in the syllabus by adding, that "We force our way through the language and the letters, the grammar and the style, to the inner substance of the thought, for there, if at all, we shall find God." Upon these views of Dr. Briggs thus expressed we offer a few critical remarks, with no attempt to expand them.

In the first place, we might ask how it is possible to transfer the divine power into any language, if that authority has not in the first in-

stance belonged to the language? If the divine *authority* is not in the text, the words or the style, how can Dr. Briggs consistently speak of transferring the divine *power* into any language? The denial, in this way, of the inspiration verbally of the original text, renders it impossible to introduce divine authority into any subsequent set of words employed to set forth the concept or thought. But we merely note this in passing.

In the second place, it is difficult to understand clearly what Dr. Briggs means by the "concept" in which the divine authority resides, and whether he means the same thing by divine authority as is usually denoted by inspiration. The second passage quoted above indirectly defines the "concept" to be "the inner substance of the thought." Speaking in plain terms, we may suppose that Dr. Briggs simply means that the thoughts, not the words, are inspired. But even here we cannot help asking again: Whose concept or thought is meant? Is it God's or man's? If it be God's, how can we be sure that we have that concept correctly before us, unless the words used to convey it be also divine? If it be merely man's concept, gathered from language devoid of divine authority, then it can have no authority at all. It is likely the former that Dr. Briggs means, and if so he must show how it comes to pass that we can be sure of grasping that concept in which alone the divine element is to be found.

In the third place, Dr. Briggs must refute a very influential school of philologists who hold that the connection between thought and language is not arbitrary, but definite. Müller may be taken as a leading representative of this theory. In a treatise published a few years ago he argued strongly for this opinion, and in another issued only last year on "Natural Religion," he further fortifies his position. In Lecture XIV. he says that "we think in words," and that "a concept cannot exist without a word." We do not assert that Müller is right, but we say that Dr. Briggs must refute the learned philologist before his way is clear for a complete rejection of verbal inspiration. If the concept carries the word with it, then the inspiration of the concept also involves the inspiration of the word. So, too, when we have the word we can be so much more sure of the concept when both are bound together; and if there be a divine element in the word, any translation which truly reproduces the word carries the concept with it, and gives at least a secondary divine authority to a reliable translation. All of this Dr. Briggs must clear away, else his theory is wrecked.

In the fourth place, Dr. Briggs is not only in conflict with the concensus of leading Presbyterian theologians, but he has broken with the traditions of even Union Seminary on this question. Dr. Briggs is well aware that all the leading theologians of the Presbyterian Church, both North and South, hold in its general outlines the theory of verbal inspiration; and all the great treatises from their pens set forth this opinion. But Dr. Briggs thinks that these theologians, especially the "Princeton divines" and the "Southern scholastics," have been erecting barriers about the Bible, and that his mission in the chair of Biblical Theology is to break these barriers down, so that men may easily find a God, now half-hidden from view by verbal inspiration and other obstacles. It is of more significance to note that Dr. Briggs has broken with the traditions of Union Seminary by his views on inspiration. The devout and philosophic H. B. Smith will be taken by most of the friends of Union Seminary to be a noble representative man. Of him the late Dr. Hitchcock, of the same seminary, once said, that "he was alike conservative and progressive in his theology." Let us hear what he has to say in his *Introduction to Christian Theology*: "Inspiration is the divine influence upon the word and utterance of man, through which the revelation from God is presented to men." And again: "Inspiration is that divine influence by virtue of which the truths and facts given by revelation, as well as other truths and facts pertaining to God's kingdom, are spoken or written in a truthful and authoritative manner." (P. 204.) In regard to verbal inspiration, he adds: "Inspiration gives us a book properly called the Word of God, *inspired in all its parts*. The inspiration is plenary in the sense of extending to all the parts, *and of extending also to the words*." (P. 209.) With the views of Dr. Shedd, till last year Professor of Dogmatic Theology in Union Seminary, most of our readers are familiar. He adopts the verbal theory in such terms as these: "The suggestion of ideas inevitably involves the suggestion of words." "Verbal inspiration is the truth, if thought is prior to and suggests language." (*Dogmatic Theology*, pp. 89, 90.) He then argues at length to show that words are not arbitrary signs of ideas, and so confirms his views of verbal inspiration, and the inerrancy of Scripture. It is painfully manifest that Dr. Briggs has broken with the traditions of his own seminary, and it is to be feared that the friends of the institution are, in great numbers, drifting from their old moorings, and we can only ask *Whither?*

But the limits of this note are more than exceeded, so that we must

forbear saying some things we had intended concerning the contents of the Biblical Theology indicated in the syllabus. We had intended to show that it is defective, not so much by what it says, as by what it leaves unsaid, but it is enough to remark that unless he gives more prominence to the objective redemptive facts which the Scriptures record, especially in regard to vicarious sacrifice in his teaching than is indicated in the syllabus, his system will be very incomplete. Biblical Theology has a place and important work, but it must be biblical in the strict sense, and not merely rational and ethical.

The views contained in the syllabus concerning "miracles" and "prophecy" may be understood when it is merely stated that the ordinary doctrines regarding them are considered "Barriers to the Bible" by Dr. Briggs. To speak of "mercy as the favorite divine attribute" is surely to forget that infinite perfection pertains alike to all the attributes of Deity. He asserts that progressive sanctification after death is the doctrine of the Bible, but he utterly fails to explain whether this shall consist in the removal of some remains of sin, or simply in growth in divine life. If the latter, few will deny it; but if the former, he is hard by the door of purgatory. Election is merely "the election of men to salvation by the touch of divine love." What he means by this sentence is more than we can understand: "The Bible does not teach universal salvation, but it does teach the salvation of the world, of the race of man; and that cannot be accomplished by the selection of a limited number from the mass." And how all this can be harmonized with the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church is a question which Dr. Briggs must answer.

Attention has been called by several journals to the fact that the General Assembly must pass upon the election and installation of Dr. Briggs, and that the Board of Union Seminary has forestalled the Assembly by settling Dr. Briggs in his chair. *The Independent* and the *Presbyterian* both allude to this fact. From "Moore's Digest" (p. 390), and from Minutes of Assembly for 1870 (p. 148), it is clear that the Assembly has veto power in the case of Dr. Briggs.¹ This at once raises and forces on the Assembly a distinct issue. If the Assembly next May in Detroit should pronounce its veto, what will Union Semi-

¹ Since this was written it has been claimed in certain quarters that the Assembly cannot exercise its veto power in the case of Dr. Briggs, since he is merely transferred from one chair to another, not elected for the first time. Should Union Seminary not report the election to the Assembly for action, it remains to be seen what the Assembly will do in the premises.

nary do? But if the Assembly takes no notice of the matter, then it will be admitted that a man may hold the views of Dr. Briggs, and teach them in a high position and yet be in good standing in the Presbyterian Church. Our brethren at the North cannot avoid the issue thus raised, which in its practical results may be far more important than the report of the Revision Committee.

We conclude this already too long note with a quotation from *The Independent*, which cannot be regarded as an extreme or harsh critic: "What we have said has been said in sorrow, and with much regret, and from a simple sense of duty. We do not think the address fitted to the theme or the occasion, or adapted to do good service in the interests of Biblical Theology, and have felt constrained to put on record our objections thereto. That sort of higher criticism which accepts as true what it finds in the Bible, not because it finds it there, but because it is true, and hence rejects what in its judgment is not true, even if there found, logically undermines the very foundations of a *supernatural* revelation from God, such as the Bible purports to be, and as we believe it to be. We believe the Bible to be 'the word of God' in the sense of a supernatural inspiration, and hence believe that when the meaning of its language is ascertained, the absolute law of faith is supplied touching all matters therein embraced. If this be 'Bibliolatry,' then so be it. It is just the kind of 'Bibliolatry' which Christ and his disciples clearly had in respect to the Old Testament Scriptures."

FRANCIS R. BEATTIE.

Columbia, S. C.

VIII. CRITICISMS AND REVIEWS.

GLADSTONE'S "IMPREGNABLE ROCK OF HOLY SCRIPTURE."

THE IMPREGNABLE ROCK OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. *By the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M. P.* Revised and enlarged from *The Sunday-School Times*. 12mo; pp. 358. Philadelphia: John D. Wattles. 1891.

This work is Mr. Gladstone's latest contribution to the Christian literature of our day. Its author has passed the ordinary limit of active life, "four score years," yet the work before us shows no marks of failing intellectual vigor; but, on the contrary, will add to the reputation of the great English statesman and scholar with all thoughtful men.

Twenty-five years ago M. Guizot, the great French statesman and historian, published his *Meditations on Christianity*, a work of the same general character as this of Mr. Gladstone. At that time M. Guizot was seventy-nine years old; very nearly the age of Mr. Gladstone. In this work M. Guizot writes: "For myself, arrived at the term of a long life, one of labor, of reflection, and of trials—of trials in thought as well as in action—I am convinced that the Christian dogmas are the legitimate and satisfactory solutions of those religious problems which, as I have said, nature suggests and man carries in his own breast, and from which he cannot escape." The dogmas of "Creation, Providence, Original Sin, the Incarnation and Redemption," he adds, "constitute the essence of the Christian religion, and all who believe in them I hold to be Christians." Of these he writes:

"One leading and common characteristic in these dogmas strikes me at the outset; they deal frankly with the religious problems natural to and inherent in man, and offer at once the solution. The dogma of Creation attests the existence of God, as creator and legislator, and it attests also the link which unites man to God. The dogma of Providence explains and justifies prayer, that instinctive recourse of man to the living God, to that supreme power which is ever present with him in life, and which influences his destiny. The dogma of Original Sin accounts for the presence of evil and disorder in mankind and in the world. The dogmas of the Incarnation and Redemption rescue man from the consequences of evil, and open to him a prospect in another life of the reestablishment of order. Unquestionably the system is grand, complete, well-connected, and forcible; it answers to the requirements of the human soul, removes the burden which oppresses it, imparts the strength which it needs, and the satisfaction to which it aspires. Has it a rightful claim to all this power? Is its influence legitimate, as well as efficacious?" (Pp. 40, 41.)

Mr. Gladstone, in speaking of the title chosen for his book,—"*The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*,"—writes:

"The words sound like a challenge. And they are a challenge to some extent, but not in the sense that might be supposed. They are a challenge to accept the Scriptures on the moral and spiritual and historic grounds of their character in themselves, and of the work which they, and the agencies associated with them,

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